

Spain: Green asparagus cultivation grows in Andalusia

The green asparagus campaign is now starting in the province of Granada, where in many corners the crop is synonymous with green gold. The fact is that many municipalities live from this sector and it is a product which, except for some exceptional years, guarantees an income, given how price variations have not usually fluctuated by more than 10 percent in recent years.

Granada remains the province with the largest acreage devoted to the cultivation of this vegetable, accounting for three-quarters of the total productive area of Andalusia, followed by Seville, Malaga and Cordoba. Municipalities of the region of the Vega de Granada, like Huétor Vega and Láchar, as well as other towns of the West, like Salar, Loja, Villanueva Mesía, Moraleda, Montefrío, Algarinejo and Íllora, are the largest green asparagus producers of the entire region of Andalusia.

In the opinion of UPA Andalucía, "prospects point to a continuous expansion of the acreage over the coming years, mainly in the main producing provinces, because their climatology makes them very suitable to meet the vegetable's needs," and they also have the right soil to facilitate its development.

Most of these vegetables are exported, mainly to France and Germany, although they are also shipped to Switzerland, England, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy, reaching more and more distant places, including European countries farther east, such as Lithuania. Overall, around 75 percent of the Andalusian production is exported abroad.

The green asparagus grown at the heart of Andalusia is different from the production in other places because of its fine texture, intense green colour, as well as its more closed heads, which make it a highly valued and appreciated product in many markets. Of course, we must also not forget the product's health properties, as it has diuretic and detoxifying effects, combats ageing, has anti-cancer properties, prevents osteoporosis and osteoarthritis, reduces the risk of heart disease and prevents some birth defects.

The vegetable's cultivation, just like any other sector, is subject to the law of supply and demand, and "it is necessary to take into account that in spite of the slight decrease in the

acreage that the crop suffered in 2015 compared to previous years, it is increasing again since last year's campaign, and this expansion is growing faster than that of consumer demand itself."

Sources from UPA have asked the administrations to carry out a more intense promotional work to support the cultivation of green asparagus, both in the domestic market and abroad, to help bring the increases in consumption and cultivation to similar levels.

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